Failure of E.P.D. in image building abroad

7969. SHRI V. RAJESHWAR RAO:

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the External Publicity Division (EP Division) has failed in its objective of both the long-term image building and the current topical publicity of India abroad;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) what steps are being taken to explain and interpret India's foreign policy objectives;

(d) what are, in general, the qualifications of the person who man this Division; and

(e) whether Government would consider appointing professional agencies to do this job?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) There has been a perceptible improvement in India's international image in the media and amongst the public abroad. India's foreign and economic policies and specific initiatives in both areas have been well received. Political stability and the successful and orderly holding of Assembly Eletions have reinforced the generally accepted view of the strength, resilience and maturity of Indian democracy. The policy of transparency combined with new initiatives on Kashmir and human rights issues and their forceful projection abroad have contained Pakistan's high-pitched propaganda against India on these issues. There is today a greater appreciation of the realities in India and of India's policies than before.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Division has taken several new steps to explain, interpret and project India's foreign policy objectives. These included upgradation of our communications system with missions and posts abroad; use of modern publicity techniques and professional public relations, lobbying and advertising agencies; diversification and augmentation of channels of communication and mass media including projection through satellite television; broad basing of publicity by involvement of non-governmental and professional agencies, and promotion of Indian audio/visual software.

(d) The External Publicity Division, is manned by senior officers from the Indian Foreign Service who have been selected by the UPSC through an all-India competitive examination.

(e) The External Publicity Division already employs professionals and professional agencies in the preparation and placement of its publicity materials. Such agencies are regularly used in the production of publications, documentary or video films, feature articles on various subjects, public relations activities and advertising and media strategy.

Official Spokesmen in Indian Missions

7970. SHRI PRAGADA KOTAIAH:

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many official spokesmen of India are there in Indian missions abroad;

(b) whether Government are satisfied with their liaison with international media; and

(c) what steps are being taken to train these spokesmen; and to reorient them from time to time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Head of Missions/Posts as well as specially designated press and information officers in Indian missions act as official spokesmen of India.